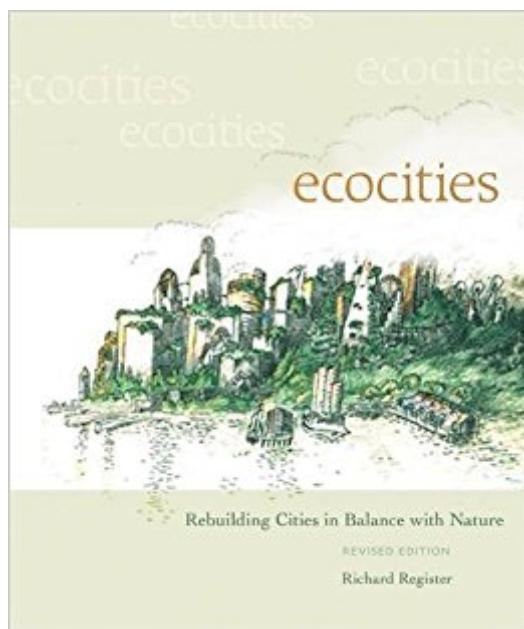


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EcoCities: Rebuilding Cities In Balance With Nature



Synopsis

Most of the world's population now lives in cities. So if we are to address the problems of environmental deterioration and peak oil adequately, the city has to be a major focus of attention. Ecocities is about re-building cities and towns based on ecological principles for the long term sustainability, cultural vitality and health of the Earth's biosphere. Unique in the literature is the book's insight that the form of the city really matters and that it is within our ability to change it, and crucial that we do. Further, that the ecocity within its bioregion is comprehensible and do-able, and can produce a healthy and potentially happy future. Ecocities describes the place of the city in evolution, nature and history. It pays special attention to the key question of accessibility and transportation, and outlines design principles for the ecocity. The reader is encouraged to plunge in to its economics and politics: the kinds of businesses, planning and leadership required. The book then outlines the tools by which a gradual transition to the ecocity could be accomplished. Throughout, this new edition is generously illustrated with the author's own inspired visions of what such rebuilt cities might actually look like. Richard Register is one of the world's great theorists and authors in ecological city design and planning. The founder of Urban Ecology and Ecocity Builders, he convened the first International Ecocity Conference in 1990, lectures around the world, and has authored two previous books, as well as an earlier edition of Ecocities.

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Customer Reviews

null (2006-05-01)Most of the world's population now lives in cities. So if we are to address the problems of environmental deterioration and peak oil adequately, the city has to be a major focus of attention. EcoCities is about re-building cities and towns based on ecological principles for the long term sustainability, cultural vitality and health of the Earth's biosphere. Unique in the literature is the book's insight that the form of the city really matters-and that it is within our ability to change it, and crucial that we do. Further, that the ecocity within its bioregion is comprehensible and do-able, and can produce a healthy and potentially happy future. EcoCities describes the place of the city in evolution, nature and history. It pays special attention to the key question of accessibility and transportation, and outlines design principles for the ecocity. The reader is encouraged to plunge in to its economics and politics: the kinds of businesses, planning and leadership required. The book then outlines the tools by which a gradual transition to the ecocity could be accomplished.

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Richard Register is one of the world's great theorists and authors in ecological city design and planning. The founder of Urban Ecology and Ecocity Builders, he convened the first International Ecocity Conference in 1990, lectures around the world, and has authored two previous books as well as an earlier edition of Ecocities (Berkeley Hills Press, 2002).

After reading I now have a much better sense of what is stake in transforming our ugly urban sprawl into something more akin to the 'ecocities' proposed by Register. The project is Utopian of course, but on a longer scale of, say, several centuries, I think a transition of this kind and magnitude stands before us as an evolutionary imperative. Register is also just fun to read, and he has lots of great facts/concepts you probably have not heard elsewhere.

I originally purchased this book for an urban development class and have found it to be an interesting perspective on urban planning. Where I live now there is a movement towards mixed-use building as Register suggests and I would welcome continued urban growth that features both accommodating growing populations and the need to conserve the ecological balance. As some reviews have indicated, this is a seemingly idealistic book but if enough people believe in these ideas, then couldn't it become a reality? For students of urban planning and sustainability, this is a wonderful book that includes almost whimsical hand-drawn examples of the author's plans. While it isn't necessarily the end-all, be-all book on the future of urban planning, it is a refreshing take on a

field that needs to seriously shift the traditional way it does business if we want to better prepare ourselves for urban sustainability.

EcoCities is a book I have returned to repeatedly and discovered new insights every time. Register is no utopian dreamer; he's addressing real problems in contemporary urban design and land use patterns that cannot be sustained in a lower-energy future. Register's personality comes through loud and clear in his writing--this is no dry treatment of the subject. Through this book, Register helps us to envision with some specificity what urban landscapes light on automobiles but rich in biodiversity could look like. It's as if he's illustrating a series of before and after treatments of various spaces, but the before picture is now and the after is a future yet to be realized. Highly recommended reading for anyone who wants to help actively design their built environment towards sustainability.

Richard Register is a dreamer, but his book will make you look at your city from a different perspective. The text makes extremely good points about clustering development into mixed use centers to preserve open space and reduce transportation costs. His comment that "proximity is the most efficient means of access" was profound- ie, the cheapest way to get someone to an amenity or job is to have the amenity and job nearby already. After reading the book, I started to see the possibilities of remaking my own town for reduced traffic and better bike and ped access, and intensification in the right places. What was frustrating and distracting is Register's obsession with vertical structures. Throughout the book, we are treated to sketches of remade cities with additions gradually piled on top of existing buildings, festooned with pedestrian walkways and keyhole view sheds, leaving the city looking like a giant lopsided wedding cake. I buy his argument that we shouldn't limit ourselves to 4 story buildings, but it is silly to think people could just keep adding on levels to buildings regardless of structural capacity. Also, he barely mentions how people would make a living in these new, mostly car-less ecocities. The assumption is that people work near home. Are we all tele-commuting? Producing local goods? Assigned to a local industry? This seemed to be a major fault.

Along with books like Natural Capitalism and Cradle to Cradle, Ecocities takes its place among the most important environmental tomes of our day. In a nutshell, Richard Register's vision (replete with a plan to get us there) could transform our world. In fact a structural response like ecocities (and smart growth) may be the best tools available to bring us to our only destination, sustainability. In

his thoughtful book, Register waxes poetic on the environmental crisis we face, shares a grand vision for addressing the crisis -- while simultaneously improving our everyday lives -- and wraps it up with a road map for getting there. His many illustrations spark the imagination and are guaranteed to put a smile on your face. If you haven't read it, just do. Buy this important book now.

When I first picked this book up, I was very excited. I'm extremely interested in learning about the practical design issues involved in creating more sustainable cities. I was disappointed by how little the author focused on practical engineering issues and concrete examples. Instead, I found fuzzy philosophy and strained analogies to the Big Bang and evolution. I'm a tree hugging, environmentalism kool-aid drinking hippy, but give me a break. The author wants to use cosmology as a rationale for his design philosophy? I recommend passing on this one and reading Natural Capitalism or Plan B 4.0; those two books present concrete ideas and solutions rather than rambling around without actually saying anything.

This is very well written book where if the topic is not so stichy as a novel, the author is able to mae it follow with non_stop. I used for having a wider view of the problematic with the cities and i think it gave me a very complete and detailed picture of it. I specially like when he proposed the proressive evolution of the urban spaces. In conclusion, a very good book whem discussing in the idealistic field but without proper technical knowledge for making it happen.

The most amazing book I have ever read...life-altering look at evolutionary coexistence. There is hope for our future...with others understanding and implementing ecocity principles. Please - I challenge you to read and use the book...our way of being depends on it.

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